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BERNARD SHAW'IN PYGMALION ADLI ESERİNDE ELIZA DOOLITTLE'I ŞEKİLLENDİREN ERKEK HEYKELTIRAŞLAR

Özet

Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion* adlı eserinde, bir kadının yeniden yaratılma sürecindeki erkek velayeti ve başatlığının yapıcı ve yıkıcı yönleriyle ilgili gerçekleri inceler. Eserin başlığı, Shaw'ın oyununun temelini oluşturan Ovid'in mitolojik hikayesini ve alt algısal mesajlarını anlamayı gerektirir. Ovid'in hikayesindeki erkek heykeltıraş Pygmalion'a, yaptığı bir fildişi heykelden kusursuz bir kadın yaratma gücü bahşedilir. Bir kadın düşmanı olan Pygmalion'ın meydana getirdiği eser, erkek beğenisiyle donatılmış bir varlığın yaratılmasıyla ses bulan erkek bakış açısının bütün özelliklerini içerir. Benzer şekilde Shaw'ın eseri *Pygmalion*'da da Eliza, yaratıcısının uzmanlığı olan sesbilgisinin öğretileriyle şekillenir. Ancak, cansız bir heykelin aksine, Eliza'nın ait olmadığı bir sınıfta varolabilmesi için geliştirmesi gereken başka beceriler de vardır. Bu noktada, bu çalışma Eliza'nın dönüşümünde erkek karakterlerin üstlendiği rolleri tanımlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Bernard Shaw, Pygmalion, Eliza Doolittle, Henry Higgins

MALE SCULPTORS IN THE MOLDING OF ELIZA DOOLITTLE IN BERNARD SHAW'S PYGMALION

Abstract

In his play, *Pygmalion,* Bernard Shaw explores the very facts about the constructive and destructive sides of male power and dominancy over the re-creation of a female. The title of the play calls for an understanding of Ovid's mythological story and its subliminal messages which also provide a basis for Shaw's play. In Ovid's story, Pygmalion, a male sculptor, is granted the power to create a female paragon out of an ivory statue. As a woman hater, Pygmalion's

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creation embodies all the traits of a male perspective that echoes itself in the making of a creature embellished with the choices of a male taste. Similarly, in Shaw's *Pygmalion*, Eliza is molded with the teachings of her male creator's profession, which is phonetics. However, unlike a lifeless statue, Eliza needs to improve some other skills in order to exist in a social class she is not born into. In this juncture, this paper aims at defining the roles of male characters in Eliza's transformation.

Key words: Bernard Shaw, Pygmalion, Eliza Doolittle, Henry Higgins

MALE SCULPTORS IN THE MOLDING OF ELIZA DOOLITTLE

Pygmalion is a play which explores the realities behind a practically fulfilling transformation of a flower girl into a "duchess" through a speech education. In the process of this education, the Cockney student, Eliza Doolittle, is exposed to many changes the results of which both make her what she is and what she is not. In other words, this process is a painful one which enables her to realize the vagueness of her existence as a born poor girl in the world of fantasy introduced to her by her maker, Professor Higgins. That is why, Eliza's ending up as somebody with excellent speech skills but with nobody in her natural environment to practice these skills on triggers in her the feelings of fear and frustration rather than bliss and hope.

The fact that Eliza voluntarily undergoes a transformation brings about a question as to why she craves such a drastic change and what she expects to find after the transformation is over. As a product of the Edwardian society - a society which based its morals and beliefs on Victorian ethics and mores - Eliza feels trapped between her lower class heritage and her wish to be treated as a respectable human being, for respect is something only deserved by the upper class members of the very society. The class system of the era which labels all the population as worthy or unworthy is best described in John Morley's words: "a paradise for the well-to-do, a purgatory for the able, and a hell for the poor" (qtd. in Buckley 5). Therefore, it is understandable why a person like Eliza would do anything for an opportunity to move up on the social ladder.

However, such a shift is not optional or free from struggle. A change in one's social status is dependent on that person's ability to adopt some rules and behaviors dictated by class-conscious male dominated society. In an environment where women are forced to live in the shadow of men, it is very gruesome especially for a down-start like Eliza to have access into a life style which is very foreign to her. Physical make over is always the easiest, for it is only about materials that money can buy. Yet manners and good speech are what a person learns from the family as the trademarks of one's social class; for this reason, they are the most time consuming practices as far as an overall change is concerned.

That Eliza is bereft of acknowledgement in polite society due to her terrible Cockney accent is something she has to work on very hard because the use of language (good pronunciation and articulate speech) is one of the determiners of one's social standing. Along with her Lisson Grove lingo, Eliza makes it very obvious that she is a lower class girl and as Reynolds puts it, "lower classes are banished from view: out of sight, out of mind" and moreover "the poor are denied the status of human beings" (22). This is such a widespread view that even Eliza's Pygmalion, Higgins, who gives her a new identity, treats her the way any

upper class person would: calling her names like "you squashed cabbage leaf, you disgrace to the noble architecture of these columns, you incarnate insult to the English language" (18)[2], "a baggage" (26), a "draggletailed guttersnipe" (29), "unfortunate animal" (51), and "creature (76) later on.

However rude Higgins might be, his playful offer to pass her off as a duchess in three months at an ambassador's party is something irresistible for Eliza. The offer is what foreshadows Higgins's self esteem as a professional linguist whereas it signifies a passage from the gutter to a more reasonable life for the poor Eliza. Passing off as a duchess is not likely for Eliza to be her dream; her expectations are less fantastical: "I want to be a lady in a flower shop stead of selling at the corner of Tottenham Court Road" she says, adding that they will not employ her unless she can talk "more genteel" (26). At her visit to the laboratory in Wimpole Street, although at first Higgins is not eager at all "to waste another cylinder on" a lingo he already has all the records of, he changes his mind when this task turns into a challenge about the ambassador's party by the encouragements of Pickering. Pickering says, "I'll say you are the greatest teacher alive if you make that good. I'll bet you all the expenses of the experiment you cant do it. And I'll pay for the lessons" (39). From that point on, a transformation process is in progress and Eliza has to surrender to her creator; she being the experimental object and Higgins the scientist.

This point is not only the beginning of a language education but also of a period where Eliza will discover many things about her own self in the hands of her male sculptor/s. Although there is no doubt Eliza has had male acquaintances before and she has an idea about what it feels like to live in male authority, she still has no idea about what being exposed to man's abusive language feels like each and everyday. In this sense, the teacher Higgins and his assistant Pickering play rather critical roles in Eliza's molding into a new identity. Vesonder argues that "Linguistic knowledge and skills are the great weapons which Higgins uses to defeat evil and improve society" (42). He furthers this view with the fact that her English will keep Eliza in "the clutches of the monster of poverty, which was to Shaw the greatest modern demon" Vesonder states that "Higgins cannot kill this monster, but he can use his weapons to free Eliza from its grip" (42).

Higgins's professional skills are unquestionable but his manners are detestable even for a girl who is, in Higgins's own words, "so deliciously low – so horribly dirty" (29). His devotion to his profession is quite admirable but as Crompton explains, he is a paradoxical character: "He is at once a tyrannical bully and a charmer, an impish schoolboy and a flamboyant wooer of souls, a scientist with a wildly extravagant imagination and a man so blind to the nature of his own personality that he thinks of himself as timid, modest, and different" (146-7). All these qualities make him a difficult person to get along with but still he is a model for Eliza to learn things from; as a combination of good and bad examples, Higgins offers Eliza many choices to pick from and be the individual she has yearned so far. That is, his oppressive behavior, bullying, and aggression towards Eliza - which are actually the reflections of his natural self towards anybody – teaches Eliza what is right and what is wrong in human relationships. The point which Higgins misses, or rather does not care about at all, catches Pickering's attention. That is why the following conversation bears significance:

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[2] All references hereafter will be to *Shaw, Bernard. Pygmalion.* London: Penguin, 2003.

> PICKERING [*in good-humored* remonstrance] Does it occur to you, Higgins, that the girl has some feelings?
>
> HIGGINS [*looking critically at her*] Oh, no. I dont think so. Not any feelings that we need bother about. [*Cheerily*] Have you, Eliza?
>
> LIZA. I got my feelings same as anyone else (32).

Naturally, Eliza is not the "baggage" Higgins considers her to be. She has feelings and she needs appreciation. Also, her constant cry "I am a good girl, I am" calls for attention. She does not want to be misunderstood or misused by men. Her anxiety derives from the fact that she is poor and as Reynolds suggests, "the poor are stereotyped as morally weak" (23). Higgins, obviously, does not classify her as a morally weak girl but he does not treat her the other way, either. According to Higgins, she is no better than a material to be disposed of after his experiment is over. That is why, Higgins's maid Mrs Pearce's concern about Eliza's future means nothing to him. Mrs Pearce thinks that a girl cannot be picked up "like a pebble on the beach" (30) to which Higgins comes up with a practical solution "When Ive done with her, we can throw her back into the gutter" (32).

Having the upper hand, Higgins threatens, bullies, and scares Eliza; from the very moment, their relationship underlies 'dependence' which is tied, as Innes asserts, "metaphorically to the classic dyads of male and female, master and slave, colonizer and colonized" (225). In this context, Eliza seems to have no free will but an obligation to fulfill his master's demands and to come out of this test successfully in order to boost his ego. Eliza's 'failure' at Mrs Higgins's at-home - a rehearsal for the ambassador's party - is significant in the sense that she feels inclined to join the polite conversation which requires a kind of knowledge to improvise rather than the repetition of certain words dictated to her by Higgins. Her out of place stories and natural way of speech appall the older generation but since she looks elegant in her classy dress, they are all acknowledged as 'the new small talk' which is becoming fashionable among the younger generation. Her future husband Freddy's comment, "The new small talk. You do it so awfully well" (61) makes Eliza feel comfortable about herself and that is how she, in a way, passes the test because Mrs Eynsford Hill does not even recognize the girl she suspected of being a prostitute in the beginning of the play. Yet still, Eliza's "not bloody likely" gathers the remarks of shock while she is leaving; it is ironic in the sense that that word was unintentionally taught her by her creator - by someone who has always been a member of polite society.

As is clear, Higgins tutorial does not exceed the limits of the correct pronunciation of the sounds because he himself lacks proper manners. It is Pickering who teaches her manners and to feel like a lady. From the time they first meet, Pickering is always attentive to her needs and sensitive to her delicacies. That is why he assumes a role of a mediator in order to make Higgins's attacks less hurtful for Eliza. Moreover, his unconditional respect for everybody around him is something which does not escape Eliza. While comparing him to Higgins, Eliza says: "He treats a flower girl as if he was a duchess" (98). This is what makes a great difference in Eliza's new world. Thus, it is not easy to say Eliza is more grateful to Higgins for the proper English he taught her than she is to Pickering for the proper manners he embellished her with. She mentions "a hundred little things" about Pickering, from "standing up," "taking off [his] hat," to "opening doors" (95); and she furthers her praises and appreciation for Pickering's gentle behavior by making the most

crucial analysis about "what began [her] real education" (94). She says: "Your calling me Miss Doolittle that day when I first came to Wimpole Street. That was the beginning of self-respect for me" (95). In the meantime, she belittles the education she has received from Higgins by saying: "It was just learning to dance in the fashionable way" (94).

Then again, it is Pickering's teachings which give Eliza the courage to throw Higgins's slippers at his face when her remarkable success at the ambassador's party goes unappreciated. Eliza masters the English language that night and with her outstanding appearance she is even mistaken for a princess. Hers is a great accomplishment and the bet is won. Yet after they return home, instead of saying a few good words to make Eliza feel good about herself after the great test, Higgins prefers to look for his slippers and ignore her; he says, "No more artificial duchesses" (75). Actually, the party has been the center of interest since the beginning of their union, however it turns into a "silly notion" and a "bore" for Higgins right after he feels that they would "win hands down" (75). Actually, Eliza means nothing to Higgins more than a slipper snatcher. The scene in which the slippers becomes the center of attention announces the breaking point in Eliza's real awakening. It is her first real rebellion against her oppressor/creator and her fury is expressed in her words: "I wanted to smash your face, I'd like to kill you, you selfish brute" (76). Here, for the first time in her life, she claims her rights as an individual imbued with sense and feeling. She feels ready to make some choices concerning her future, for her questions such as, "What am I fit for? What have you left me fit for? Where am I to go? What am I to do? Whats to become of me?" (78) get an answer from Higgins as simple as this: "You might marry, you know" (78).

According to Higgins, Eliza is now eligible for a marriage. Although as a 'confirmed old bachelor' he is never in favor of marriages, he makes it obvious that the best alternative for her is to move in the shelter of another man. As Shaw confirms, "Men's world is, supposedly, that of business while women's is marriage" (qtd. in Innes 226) However, this idea is not appealing for Eliza because she associates marriage institution with the notion that in order for a woman to survive in a patriarchal society she should find somebody to look after her financially. And, according to Eliza, this is not different from selling your body for money. She reacts: "I sold flowers. I didnt sell myself. Now youve made a lady of me I'm not fit to sell anything else" (78). In fact, this is an outburst. Eliza knows very well that with her new refined speech and appearance she is not fit for selling flowers from now on. She knows for sure that she doesn't belong to lower class anymore but she cannot make up her mind as to what her new class demands from her. She is scared to be trapped into, as her father calls it "middle class morality" (45). She feels that she is expected to assume some roles prescribed for her by the society; that is why she says to Higgins: "I wish youd left me where you found me" (78), later she adds, "If only I could go back to my flower basket! I should be independent of both you and father and all the world! Why did you take my independence from me? (101). However, as Lorich writes, "instead of the futility of the idle genteel life with its "husband-hunting," Eliza is an energetic type who would prefer to create some opportunities to better her circumstances (108). As evidenced later, Eliza even finds the superior power in herself to threaten Higgins with the same weapon he has made Eliza into a slave. "I'll teach phonetics," she says and adds: "Ill offer myself as an assistant to that hairyfaced Hungarian" (104).

Although Eliza holds Higgins responsible for the identity crisis she suffers from and, to a certain extent, he is irksome to her, it is again Higgins Eliza resorts to for help. That is because she is "a child in [his] country" and she can speak no other language but his (98). So it is evident that Eliza's affiliation with Higgins will turn into a long term relationship although she, for some time, will take refuge in Higgins's mother's home. Furthermore, Higgins is also reluctant to let her go because he thinks he owns the girl since he paid five pounds to her dustman father the day he came to Higgins's laboratory to claim her daughter back. That day reveals many things about male point of view on the place of a woman in a patriarchal world: Eliza is first taken as an object and then commercialized as a marketable product.

Also, the day Alfred Doolittle appears in Wimpole Street unfolds the facts about Eliza's struggle for survival with an absent father. Doolittle is her biological father and can be considered her first sculptor. It would not be right to say that he is worth being labeled as a father in its common sense because it is Doolittle and his sixth 'missus' who tell Eliza that she is "big enough to earn [her] own living and turn [her] out. And the reason why he pays a visit to the place where her daughter lives with two men is not fatherly duty but the rights of an owner. He claims that the girl belongs to him and says, "Regarded in the light of a young woman, she's a fine handsome girl. As a daughter she's not worth her keep […] Well, whats a five-pound note to you? and whats Eliza to me? (45). Doolittle also makes it known to the two men that if their intentions were not honorable he would ask for fifty and that he cannot afford any morals. When Higgins mentions Doolittle in a joking way as "the most original moralist at present in England" (88) during a correspondence with an old blighter in America, Doolittle rises from 'undeserving poverty' to an income amounting to three thousand pounds a year "on condition that [he] lecture for his Wannafeller Moral Reform World League as often as they ask [him] up to six times a year (88-9). Even when he makes a move on the social ladder due to his rhetorical skills, Doolittle is more concerned about his own grief over 'being the victim of middle-class morality" than the worries haunting her daughter. More specifically, he is in pain because he feels like "an undeserving poor man done out of his natural right to happiness by the narrow-minded prejudices of middle-class morality" (Crompton 145). That is, he has more serious problems in life than having to take care of a daughter.

To conclude, in Eliza's molding process, the male touch irrevocably intersects with one another. Higgins equips Eliza with flawless speech skills; Pickering ornaments her with distinguished manners, and Doolittle, as the absent father, unknowingly teaches her how to survive without the emotional and financial support of a protective figure. In this sense, all three men, as the sculptors of a living statue, molds Eliza into a shape in a process at the end of which she finds herself strong enough to manage her affairs the way she wants them to be. She is able to transform herself from a 'guttersnipe' into a "consort for a king" and a "tower of strength" (105). For this reason, it is not surprising to see her choose Freddy as her husband over any other possible candidates, who is according to Higgins, a "poor devil who couldnt get a job as an errand boy even if he had the guts to try for it! (104). The only thing Eliza cares for is Freddy's affection. And that is the whole thing she lacks and has a craving for in her life. She says, "Freddy loves me: that makes him king good enough for me. I dont want him to work: he wasnt brought up to it as I was" (104) which is a declaration of her desperate need for love as well as her reliance in herself as a prospective

benefactor of a male. She leaves her assigned role aside as a female and feels determined to coexist with men while trying to establish a life for herself and her husband. As a result, she continues her life with three father figures and a male figure who needs to be "fathered" by her.

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